



Organ & Tissue Donation

Why is organ, tissue and eye donation so important?

Thousands of Wisconsin families are among those waiting for a transplant for a loved one to stay alive. Seventeen people in this country die every day because not enough organs are available.

Organ and tissue donation saves lives. One donor can save or improve the lives of more than fifty people. Donated corneas restore vision for the blind. Donated bone and connective tissue help repair defects, promote faster healing and save limbs. Donated skin saves lives of those with severe burns and repairs functional and cosmetic problems for many others.

What organs and tissues can be transplanted?

Donated kidneys, hearts, lungs, livers, pancreases, and intestines can be transplanted. Corneas, bone, heart valves, connective tissue, and skin are among the tissues that can be transplanted. More than 20,000 organ transplants, 46,000 eye transplants and 750,000 tissue transplants are performed each year in the United States.

Is there a conflict between saving a person's life and donation?

No. Physicians and nurses do everything possible to save a patient's life. Only after they determine that further efforts would be futile does a transplant team become involved.

Is organ, tissue and eye donation difficult on the donating family?

Donation may provide immediate and long-term consolation, especially in light of sudden, unexpected circumstances. The family members of the donor often feel encouraged that something good has come out of something tragic.

May I become a donor if I have had cancer?

Yes, it may be possible to be a donor if you have had cancer. At the time of donation medical professionals will assess if your organs and tissues are suitable for transplantation.

What is the age limit for organ, tissue and eye donation?

People of all ages--from infants to seniors-- may become donors. Donor suitability is determined by considering an individual's general health. Again, medical professionals will evaluate whether an individual's organs and tissues can be transplanted.

What is the cost to the donor family?

There is no cost to the family. Transplant recipients and their health insurance pay all costs related to donation. The donor's family pays only for the medical care provided before death and funeral expenses.

Will donation affect the appearance of the donor?

Great care is taken to preserve the donor's appearance through the delicate surgical procedures that occur during organ and tissue recovery. Funeral directors work to restore the body for viewing and visitation.

Does my religion allow donation?

Most major religions in the U.S. support donation as a gift of life to fellow human beings.

What steps do I take to be a donor?

Sign your driver's license and discuss your decision with your family.

For more information: www.dhfs.wisconsin.gov/health/donatelife/

Wisconsin Coalition on Donation

*RTI Donor Services--
Allograft Resources Division*

American Heart Association

*American Liver Foundation
Wisconsin Chapter*

American Lung Association

*Blood Center of
Southeastern Wisconsin*

Lions Eye Bank of Wisconsin

LifeSource Blood Services

*Musculoskeletal Transplant
Foundation—TranSource*

*National Kidney
Foundation of Wisconsin*

*Paul Oldam, Transplant Recipient,
Member At-Large*

*University of Wisconsin
Organ Procurement Organization*

*Wisconsin Department of
Transportation*

*Wisconsin Department of
Health and Family Services*

Wisconsin Donor Network

Wisconsin Tissue Bank